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## POPULAR MUSEUM MANAGEMENT

THE Art Institute is sometimes criticised, though more often praised, for what may be called its ultra popular management. By tradition art museums are quiet and dignified, and there are those who view with a certain uneasiness the association of a museum with a school of technical instruction, the holding of numerous temporary exhibitions and especially of pageants, concerts, French readings and flower shows. There is room for a legitimate difference of opinion, and certainly some consideration may well be given to the question of where lines shall be drawn.

It is the avowed aim of the Art Institute to make itself useful to the community and, to this end, agreeable. That the visiting of museums is often a dreary business the most enthusiastic student of art must acknowledge. The necessarily concentrated attention is of itself exhausting, and when surroundings are cold and forbidding, the exhaustion is greatly increased, and the impression which remains is, to say the least, one of mixed enjoyment and fatigue.

It is therefore highly desirable, from a popular point of view, that art museums be divested of their traditional character of mere cold storage places for pictures and art objects, and should be given if possible a warm, living, human-hearted character which shall convey to both the critic and the ordinary visitor impressions of comfort and enjoyment. The mere arrangement of exhibition galleries is an important element, and we believe that the Art Institute is successful in this matter. The effect of the successive rooms, simply related, varying in dimen-

sions, height and decoration, contributes to the enjoyment of the visitor more than he is aware. The galleries are, as a foreign visitor expressed it, "sympathetic."

A great school so closely connected with a museum gives an element of life that nothing else can quite produce. The students constantly frequent the galleries. It is to the school that we owe the astonishing statistics of the library, which has 60,000 consulting visitors a year, four times as many as the great South Kensington art library in London. The passing exhibitions of current art productions simply acknowledge the existence of a living art as well as of an art of history. There are museum officials who think that there has been no art worth considering since the Renaissance.

The fortunate situation of the Art Institute has much to do with its large attendance. We have never put in turnstiles at the entrance, because they seem to impair a little the welcome to visitors, and the doorkeepers have no difficulty in keeping count with little mechanical registers in their hands. The many lectures and gallery tours, the free circulation of photographs, lending of lantern slides, provision of rooms for the meetings of art societies, the use of the galleries for evening receptions by various organizations, the occasional concerts, pageants, plays and students' parties, all make friends for the Art Institute among those interested in kindred arts.

Through this policy, which we believe to be public-spirited and right, the Art Institute has become a most active center of the life of Chicago, and an important influence throughout the whole valley of the Mississippi.